

USAID INSIGHT

A CELEBRATION OF EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Around the world, International Women's Day (IWD) marks a celebration of the economic, social, cultural and political achievements of women.

The first IWD was held on March 19, 1911 in Germany, Austria, Denmark and several other European countries. German women selected this date because in 1848 the Prussian king had promised the vote to women. Over one million leaflets calling for action on the right to vote were distributed throughout Germany before IWD in 1911. Now IWD is always celebrated on March 8 and is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This date is also commemorated at the United Nations and is designated in many countries, including Ukraine, as a national holiday.

Women in many countries, often divided



Finnish, Swedish and British women marching in a Suffragette parade in Brooklyn, New York.

by ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic and political differences, come together to celebrate this important date that represents equality, justice, peace and development.

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history; it is rooted in the centuries-old struggle of women seeking to participate in society on an equal footing with men. In ancient Greece, Lysistrata organized women to withhold sexual favors from their men in order to end a war; during the French Revolution, Parisian women calling for "liberty, equality, fraternity" marched on Versailles to demand women's suffrage.

The idea of an International Women's Day first arose at the turn of the century, which in the industrialized world was a period of expansion and turbulence, booming population growth and radical ideologies. Until women are fully represented at senior leadership levels of public, professional and economic life, women will have equal rights nor an equal voice.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

1909	1910	1911	1913-1914	1917
First National Women's Day	Meeting in Copenhagen establishing Women's Day	IWD marked for the first time in Austria, Denmark, Germany	Women observe first IWD in Russia	Strike for "bread and peace"

NURTURING WATCHDOGS OF DEMOCRACY

Since 2001, the Web-based media outlet *Telekritika* (www.telekritika.kiev.ua) has reported on current Ukrainian media trends and provided in-depth analysis and critical assessment of Ukrainian TV and radio program content. *Telekritika's* desire for increased availability and quality of news in Ukraine has driven it to expand into print publishing, sociological surveys, radio shows, roundtables, and presentations covering important media issues. At the helm of *Telekritika* is its founder, journalist and media expert Natalya Ligacheva.

After graduating from Taras Shevchenko State University in 1984 with a degree in journalism, Ligacheva worked for a series of media outlets including State TV and Radio of Ukraine; the National Television Company of Ukraine (NTCU); the newspapers *Kyiv Vedomosti*, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, and *Den*; and the magazine *Natalie*. Then in 2001, Ligacheva set her sights on improving professionalism in the Ukrainian media.

At the time, widespread political censorship by state authorities and the nation's media owners prevented objective and professional criticism of television news programming. Through an initial grant support

see **TELEKRITIKA**, page 2



Natalya Ligacheva, a media expert and the founder of Telekritika

INSIDE

TOP STORY

A Celebration of Education and Empowerment

page 1

SUCCESS STORIES

Nurturing Watchdogs of Democracy

page 1

Ukrainian Women Deliver Babies With New Technologies

page 2

Improving Family Planning and Reproductive Health in Ukraine

page 2

Anti-Cancer Corps

page 2

Success in Business Breeds Success in Community Service

page 3

Gender Study Gains a Better Understanding of Needs of HIV-positive people

page 3

CIPA Program Appeals to Women

page 4

UKRAINIAN WOMEN DELIVER BABIES WITH NEW TECHNOLOGIES



Companion delivery at Donetsk Maternity #3.
Photo: Gelmius Siupsinkas

Mother and infant health care in Ukraine today remains reminiscent of the austere Soviet practices of a bygone era with little emphasis on the comfort and convenience of the mother and child. Private deliveries remain rare, and the presence of a companion for psychological and moral support is just as uncommon.

Today it is still routine for several women to deliver together in one room. The mother-to-be continues to be rarely involved in decision-making during labor and delivery. She is offered only a single delivery position, an uncomfortable and dangerous supine position on a Rakhmanov bed. The elevated bed – narrow and hard – was designed for a doctor's convenience, not the mother's. Right after the birth, the baby is still often separated from the mother for routine neonatal procedures, which delays and even inhibits mother-baby bonding and the ini-

tiation of breastfeeding. Mothers and newborns are still required to stay in a hospital for 5 to 8 days after delivery, which only subjects them to hospital infections. And because they are essentially quarantined during their stay in the hospital, they are not allowed to share their joy with the rest of the family.

The situation has slowly begun to change with the start of the USAID-sponsored Mother and Infant Health Project (MIHP). Initiated in 2002, the project sought to improve reproductive health conditions for Ukrainian women by introducing effective evidence-based perinatal technologies. These practices are an integral part of the current WHO principles of perinatology. Three years later, having worked in eight regions - Donetsk, Lutsk, Lviv, Kirovohrad, Zhytomyr, Poltava (city of Komsomolsk), Kyiv, and the Crimean Republic, MIHP has seen a noticeable transformation in the mind set of health care providers; and mothers-and fathers-to-be, as well.

At MIHP sites today women deliver in friendly individual delivery rooms with soft lighting and companions present to provide support during labor and delivery. The women choose their own

free delivery position and are involved in all baby care procedures. A mother and her baby

are never separated - from birth until discharge. During labor and birth, a team consisting of a midwife, an obstetrician and a chosen companion (the husband or anyone whom a woman chooses) are present to aid the delivery process. Studies have found that the presence of a companion reduces pain during the delivery, eliminates high levels of stress, and strengthens bonding between the baby, mother and father.

"I could never have imagined that delivering our son in the Lutsk Maternity Hospital would be so enjoyable. My fears went away when I got into the delivery room with my husband because the room reminded me of a room in our house," said Ludmila Kravchenko, who delivered her baby with her husband's support in the Lutsk Maternity Hospital in January 2006.



The first breastfeeding. Photo: Alex Golubov

Companion presence in the delivery room at participating hospitals has increased from 2% to 60% since the MIHP project began. Companion presence, in turn, has influenced a significant increase in normal deliveries – up from 28% to 70% - and helped decrease the use of pain relief medication. But most importantly: no

cases of maternal death were registered in all MIHP sites in 2005.

ANTI-CANCER CORPS

Olena Yurchenko is one of many volunteers at the *Women's Health and Family Planning Charity Fund*, who visit hospitals to talk to women cancer patients, many of whom are crushed by a medical diagnosis equal to a death sentence and at a loss as to what to do next. The volunteers provide information on psychological programs the Fund offers to post-operative patients and help it can offer them during rehabilitation.

Olena understands them. She is a breast cancer survivor herself. A family history of cancer - her mother died prematurely of breast cancer at the age of 36 - doubled her chances of acquiring cancer from the outset. Olena had a benign tumor extracted at the tender age of 20. At 31, she had a malignant lump removed after a doctor initially had told her there was nothing to worry about. She underwent chemotherapy and radiation treatments, and seemed cured, but in 2001 the disease reappeared,



Olena, a volunteer for the Anti-Cancer Corps

and Olena returned to the hospital. There she met Halyna Maistruk, an OB/GYN and the head of *Women's Health and Family Planning Charity Fund* CSO, which advocates for early detection and diagnosis for breast cancer and social protection of breast cancer survivors. Olena joined the *Anti-Cancer Corps* to help others like herself.

In 2003, the Fund obtained USAID support to train regional NGOs involved in breast cancer advocacy in successful fundraising techniques

and in how to conduct awareness campaigns to promote early detection and diagnosis. It also helped regional CSOs to assess the situation in their respective regions and develop action plans. In February 2004, as a result of the training, a national advocacy network, *Together Against Cancer*, which united 19 CSOs from 14 regions of Ukraine, was created. Fund professionals have developed a multi-faceted rehabilitation for post-operation breast can-

IMPROVING FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN UKRAINE

As Ukraine strives to improve the health of its population, one of the government's priorities is women's and children's health. Compared with the European Union (EU), Ukraine's abortion rates are almost three times as high (716 v. 247/1,000 live births), contributing to elevated maternal mortality and placing women's future fertility at risk. High abortion rates, in turn, have their roots in low utilization of modern methods of contraception, with only 38% of married women in Ukraine using these methods—well below the 71% figure for the EU. Incidences of syphilis and gonorrhea are also substantially higher, likely contributing to infertility and the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS.

On January 20, USAID launched a new five-year, \$9.75 million project to address issues related to improving family planning and reproductive health. The new project plans to make family planning and reproductive health services more accessible, by expanding the range of providers beyond the traditional network of family planning clinics and dermato-venereological dispensaries. At the same time, it aims to improve the quality of these services, ensuring that they are in line with international standards. It also hopes to partner with pharmaceutical companies and pharmacies to improve access

TELEKRITIKA OPENS DOOR FOR MEDIA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

TELEKRITIKA, continued from p.1

from the U.S. Embassy, administered by Internews Ukraine, *Telekritika* was able to force open the door and offer an open forum for media analyses and discussions of reporting standards and ethics by journalists, politicians, and other interested parties. Ligacheva had realized her dream, but she didn't stop there. An independent media in Ukraine became her mantra.

Ligacheva helped create a commission on journalism ethics and, in 2002, helped organize journalist protests against censorship. The same year a journalists' roundtable adopted a "Manifesto of Journalists Against Censorship" that generated 500 signatures of support on the *Telekritika* site. Presented in parliamentary hearings on censorship that year, the manifesto resulted in a 2003 law, which first defined censorship in Ukraine. Subsequently, Ligacheva, along with *Telekritika* journalists Iryna Chemerys and Sergiy Datsyuk, formed the Kyiv Independent Media Trade Union. And in 2004, she officially registered *Telekritika* as a non-governmental organization (NGO) operating with the support of the USAID-funded NGO *Internews Network and its Strengthening Independent Media in Ukraine* (U-Media)

"WE SEE OUR MISSION AS STRENGTHENING PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM IN UKRAINE BY STIMULATING POLITICIANS, AUTHORITIES, MEDIA OWNERS, AND JOURNALISTS TO REALIZE THE IMPORTANT PUBLIC ROLE OF THE MEDIA AS THE 'WATCHDOG OF DEMOCRACY.'"

N. LIGACHEVA

Program.

Later that year, Ligacheva helped spearhead the Orange Revolution's journalist movement in which 42 journalists from six of the most popular national TV channels publicly denounced censorship and political pressure and vowed to uphold professional principles. With more than 350 signatures from over 20 regional TV companies, *Telekritika* published letters of support from other print and radio journalists, information agencies, and citizens. In the end, the united, active, and democratic effort triumphed over political and financial manipulations.

Today *Telekritika* fights for the creation of public broadcasting, transparency in the mass media, and establishment of professional standards in a press now free from political censorship but not from that of its owners. "Media issues may change in the future, but our goals remain the same," says Ligacheva. "We see our mission as strengthening professional journalism in Ukraine by stimulating politicians, authorities, media owners, and journalists to realize the important public role of the media as the 'watchdog of democracy.'"

Gender Study Gains a Better Understanding of Needs of HIV-positive people

Ukraine continues to have one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in Eastern Europe. Of the 88,000 HIV cases officially registered in Ukraine as of January 1, 2006, about 11,000 are children. Most were born to HIV-positive mothers and were infected at birth. Today women comprise 43% of the 300,000 people in Ukraine who are officially registered as HIV-positive, a drastic increase from an estimated 25% in the 1990s.

One of the factors potentially contributing to the increase in the number of women infected with HIV is the insufficient targeting and appropriate coverage of this group with HIV prevention programs, information and services. Proper attention to the gender specific aspects and needs of various target groups is a prerequisite for tailoring and developing a demand for access to effective prevention services and information. Indeed, this was a key conclusion of the research carried out in mid-2005 by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine under the USAID-funded project *Scaling up the National Response to HIV/AIDS through Information and Services* (SUNRISE).

The two groups that were utilized in the research were male and female injecting drug users (IDU), and men and women infected with HIV, either as a result of sharing non-sterile injecting equipment or

see **GENDER STUDY**, p. 4

Success in Business Breeds Success in Community Service

The name "Lyudmyla" can be translated as one who is "dear to people." Lyudmila Sobol from Khudyaki village, Cherkasy Oblast, mirrors the name fully. Her kindness and sympathy is complemented by a strong personality, which helped her succeed as the head of an agricultural service cooperative named after her.

Lyudmila got involved in agribusiness in 1995 after more than 20 years of as an economist in a state enterprise. She began with land leasing, and then decided to switch to growing and selling vegetables, first independently, and then by engaging her fellow villagers.

In 2003, Lyudmila started an agricultural service cooperative, which united 13 village vegetable growers, 10 of which were women. Soon she expanded her own vegetable production to 10 hectares with cooperative members cultivating another 24. While she considered herself a successful producer, her produce sold at very low prices during the summer due to excessive vegetable supplies at that time. She knew she could do much better during the off-season when vegetable prices rose. The problem was ensuring the quality.

The solution came after she took part in a USAID-supported study tour to Poland. As a cooperative leader and client of the Agricultural Marketing Project (AMP), Mrs. Sobol visited small- and medium-sized pri-



Lyudmila and associate check the cabbage crop
vate farms in Poland, where she saw farmers actively using storage facilities for packing and storing perishable produce. Polish farmers told her that this approach allowed them to sell fruits and vegetables to supermarkets at higher prices than to local street markets.

Lyudmila proposed to her partners that they should develop storage facilities for their business. Together they prepared a business plan and submitted it for consideration to the AMP grant program, which agreed to provide about 21% of the expenses required to build the storage facility. The rest was covered by the "Lyudmyla" cooperative.

In operation since the fall of 2005, the storage facility stocks a full range of traditio-

nal vegetables, including pickled cucumbers and tomatoes, most of which are sold at retail through supermarkets, mainly in Cherkasy.

The storage facility provides the cooperative with a most important advantage – it preserves vegetable quality longer which allows cooperative members to sell their produce in the off season and receive a much better price. The cooperative can also meet supermarket requirements for a stable and regular supply of high-quality vegetables year round.

The high efficiency of new vegetable production technologies gives cooperative members' confidence in the future success of their business. The restless energy of the cooperative leader, Mrs. Sobol, helps provide financial security to the 16 women of the village who work at "Lyudmyla."

While retaining a reputation as an "Iron Lady" in her work, in her everyday life she embodies the kindness and compassion reflected in her name. She supports the local kindergarten, where she also fully provides the vegetables the children require. She also donates produce to the local school and hospital, as well as taking care of repairs for all three premises. But that's not all, Mrs. Sobol also sponsors the amateur talent group in the village and the salary of the choral director. Mother of two children, in 1993 she adopted a child that she continues to care for.

CIPA PROGRAM APPEALS TO WOMEN

Alla Ozeran, an Associate Professor in Economics and Certified Auditor at Kyiv National Economic University (KNEU), recently gained one more title: Certified International Professional Accountant (CIPA).

Women make up the overwhelming majority of CIPA and Certified Accountant Practitioner certificate holders in Ukraine. Since 2002, 1,343 of the 1,664 accountants that have passed the CAP exam and 25 of the 38 who have received CIPAs have been women. Ms. Ozeran has both.

In 2002, along with other KNEU teachers, she participated in a training organized by USAID's Ukraine Accounting Reform Project during which she learned about CIPA. The CIPA International Certification Program provides Ukrainian accountants, auditors, financial managers and economists an opportunity to participate in training, take exams and obtain CAP and CIPA level certification. Based on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) principles, the Russian-language CIPA program bestows a certification recognized by the Eurasian Council of Certified Accountants and Auditors (ECCAA). Alla participated in Managerial Accounting, Financial Accounting and Audit training sessions with other teachers who represented most of the country's major universities. She easily passed exams in Managerial Accounting and Financial Accounting, and after extensive and detailed study utilizing CIPA project web site materials she even passed the tax and law portion.

Along with the satisfaction of achieving her goals, Alla Ozeran received another benefit when she was given a better-paying job. Since October 2005, Ms. Ozeran leads the project workgroup on accounting, audit



Alla Ozeran, a Certified International Professional Accountant

and taxation at the Institute of Local Development, which provides consultancy to Public Utilities Departments in different regions of Ukraine. She is using her CIPA knowledge in consulting managers of Public Utilities on managerial and tax accounting issues.

Ms. Ozeran is also utilizing her CIPA knowledge in her lectures at KNEU to explain new and complex accounting terminology. Moreover, she is using the more practical CIPA approach in her students' studies and evaluations. The KNEU Associate Professor is a strong advocate of the CIPA program to her students and encourages them to take the exams and obtain certification for better paid jobs.

ORGANIZATION RAISES BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

ANTI-CANCER CORPS, continued from p.2
cancer patients and enlisted the support of the Kyiv municipal government to expend UAH 200,000 for the program. As a result, in 2005, 94 women underwent a rehabilitation program, at a Yalta sanatorium, supported by funds from the Kyiv *Turbota* (Care) program.

To force government to pay more attention to the problem of breast cancer, which it has largely disregarded, the national advocacy network, now called the National Coalition *Advocacy Against Cancer*, conducted a nationwide awareness campaign called, *Knowledge Defeats Cancer*, which UCAN/USAID partially funded, and included development of news articles and a televi-

sion documentary. The campaign has brought nationwide attention to breast cancer issues, and the *Advocacy Against Cancer* coalition now consists of over 25 organizations from 17 regions. In 2006, the Ukrainian Parliament plans to hold hearings on breast cancer and other related problems.

Needless to say, a higher level of awareness is required and more effort is needed before the dangers of a lump on the breast are known to all women. Olena Yurchenko, who is now in her fourth year at the Fund, is a vivid example of one person who survived and proved that cancer is not a death sentence, and that many more women could defeat the disease.

GENDER IS KEY

GENDER STUDY, continued from p. 3

through heterosexual contact. The research used qualitative methodologies including focus groups and in-depth interviews.

This study of gender-related risk factors demonstrated that female IDUs are potentially more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men. The principal risk factors for female drug users in most cases are linked to a double dependency: firstly, to illicit drugs, and secondly, to men who involve women in drug use and commercial sex. In this way, a dangerous cycle of high-risk drug using and sexual behaviours is perpetuated.

The research also helped to identify a number of specific needs of female drug users. For example, females reported finding it difficult to use prevention services provided by the IDU consultation centers because this identified them as drug users - a status that goes against expected, traditional female roles and is therefore condemned by society even more so than in the case of males. Other specific needs identified by female IDUs included the need for professional consultations intended specifically for women; female self-help support groups; humanitarian and basic financial aid for children from low-income families; anti-retroviral therapy for their children; high-quality formula/nutrition for babies; and cultural and educational opportunities for children. Women also said they needed more accessible and detailed information about pregnancy, childbirth and infant feeding during medical consultations and at the time of HIV testing.

Additional needs identified by men include first, assistance in gaining employment, and second, a need to be attended to by male consultants because they were more comfortable discussing sexual and health issues with men than women, and because they perceived accepting assistance from women as a loss of "male dignity."

Alliance researchers presented the results and relevant recommendations in November 2005 at a seminar where Olexandra Mykhailova, director of the Simferopol HIV/AIDS Resources Center, which is run by the *Hope and Salvation* Charitable Foundation, was a seminar participant. She noted some practical steps they initiated based on the survey results: "In December in Simferopol, a self-help group for HIV+ women was organized, and now we have set up a group for HIV+ mothers whose children receive anti-retroviral. I believe that the gender-sensitive approaches will really help to improve the effectiveness of HIV services, custom tailor them to the needs of specific people within such sizable and vulnerable populations as people living with HIV/AIDS and IDUs."

NEW PROGRAM LAUNCHED TO IMPROVE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, continued from p.2

to a range of contraceptive methods at prices to suit every pocketbook. Another key strategy will be to educate the population — both men and women — about the benefits of contraception over abortion, so that they take steps to protect their own health.

This spring IFPRH plans to launch a competition to select the first three oblasts to participate in the project. Adding new oblasts each year, it expects to reach about half of Ukraine's oblasts by 2010.

The new project will be implemented by

John Snow, Inc., and the Academy for Educational Development and Harvard School of Public Health. This partnership has already begun to closely cooperate with the Ministry of Health, other government officials, and the private sector.